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Titusville Amateur Radio Club

TARC NEWSLETTER

October 1990 90

President's Corner

Would you like to be an Elmer? That's a somebody who will volunteer some time to assist our current class of seventeen hams-to-be in learning the code and theory to pass their tests and later help them get on the air. Our two hour session every Tuesday night can only scratch the surface of what they need to know; they need lots of code practice to supplement the tapes and our limited time. Let me know if you can adopt a few newbies and invite them to your home for extra tutoring and code practice. As an example, I will take four of them under my wing, have them come to my place once a week (or more) for a couple of hours. Here's you chance to be an Elmer and personally see to it that your newbie(s) not only gets a license but becomes an outstanding ham operator.

Thanks to all of you who made our Guest Night such a success. We had a total of fifty-nine hams and friends there for consumption of good food and comaraderie. It was such fun that we might do something similar for our Christmas Party!

See you at the meeting Tuesday night.

Editor's Desk

by Doug Reed – N4QVY

Murphy was at again putting together this newsletter. I don't want to get into the details, but I believe he was in more wires and PN junctions than ever before. However, we did it, even calling Val a couple of contiguous nights to get a *good* copy of Wynn's article. Thanks to Jerry Russell for having such a **neat** feature of allowing file attachment to mail messages on his *Tech-Talk* bulletin board system. Jerry is one of the students in the novice class, along with Al Koller, the system operator of *Space Coast Fido* BBS (I'd use Al's board if I could ever

See **Desk** on back.

Upcoming Events

> **October 23** – next TARC meeting, 7 p.m., JayCees Building on Singleton Ave.
> Every Thursday night – TARC Friendship Net, 7 p.m., 146.91 MHz (-600).
> 3rd Saturday of each month – SBARC / ARRL exams, 9:30 a.m. registration, FIT room Q11 in The Quad (under ham radio mast). For info call Bill Newkirk, WB9IVR, phone 724-6183.
> **November 16 – Deadline** for articles to be included in the November edition of the *TARC Newsletter.*
> November 3, 4 – Eustis Hamfest
> November 17, 18 – Tampa Suncoast Convention
> December 1 – Okeechobee Hamfest

Officers

President: Bob Nedimeyer W4VQB 269-1878
Vice President: Dick Duell W9LSD 383-9733
Secretary: Doug Reed N4QVY 268-1934
Treasurer: Clyde Lee K4EOS 267-9375

Minutes of the September 25 Meeting

No official business was held at the September Guest Night.

It Was A Dark And Stormy Night

By Val Valek, copyright 1990

It was a dark and stormy night when Titusville hams gathered to support Jaycees' Fourth of July Fireworks. Most of us began arriving at 6:30, with Oz, N4SZY, as the first to arrive. By virtue of arrival order, he became ersatz coordinator, passing out assignments to arriving hams.

We came prepared, toting our handy talkies, bug spray, flashlights, and umbrellas. The umbrellas did double-duty, acting as rain protection and lightening rods. Most of us with umbrellas elected to get wet.

First we each reported to the Jaycees for a strip of surveyor's tape for armbands, then reported to a position. Wynn (WB4ZUY), Bruce (WA3EKM), and I staffed the West fence. Oz, Lloyd (WB4LTK), Dan (K3KS), and Arch (WN3DHI) watched the North fence. Bud (K4CWG), Les (K4SJC), and others stayed on the South fence or with the Jaycees. The Eastern access (the river) remained unguarded, so if an invasion had been attempted, the Jaycees would have had to fend them off with a zillion pounds of pyrotechnics.

It was an orderly crowd that began arriving at 7:30. I saw many young parents with young children carefully supervising Florida-legal fireworks. It was a pleasure to watch them in action. After some time, one man approached me and asked if this was OK and I replied,

See **Dark and Stormy** on page 3.

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52 Simplex

by Wynn Rostek, WB4ZUY

Just as I pull out to pass the ancient Chevy pickup a pair of headlights come flying from behind the dense stand of red bay trees blocking my view of the sharp corner just ahead. I jam on my brakes and quickly whip my bright red '89 Jeep Cherokee back into the right lane behind the plodding blue Chevy.

The oncoming headlights blind me as a rust-eaten Volkswagon Beetle passes. For a moment all I can see is the frozen afterimage of my windshield wipers poised mid-stroke, oblong splashes of raindrops about to be smeared out of existence. A feeble red glow pierces the gloomy rain as the Chevy's left brake light comes on. I sharply jab my brakes in anger, sarcastically slowing to 15 miles an hour for the curve.

As the road straightens I wonder if I should try to pass the rolling roadblock again. It suddenly becomes a moot point as the battered pickup slows and begins to creep to the right shoulder. I watch the truck gingerly pick its way off the pavement into the shallow, orange river that was a bumpy clay road an hour ago. I glance briefly at the pitching rattletrap as I swing halfway into the left lane to pass.

After a few minutes of listening to the crisp patter of rain and the wet slapping of my wipers I punch the power button on my Yaesu 4700 and start scanning 2 meters.

A dim figure looms into view as the quartz halogen headlights pierce the veil of drizzling rain and slight fog. A disheveled hitchhiker stands dripping, thrusting out a ragged piece of cardboard, the black ink used to spell Charleston running off the makeshift sign in watery streaks. I ease the Cherokee into the left lane, afraid of striking the vagrant standing half on and half off the pavement.

The fog thickens noticeably as the road descends slightly, now cutting through a swamp. I switch rapidly between high beams and low beams several times, but neither setting can cut through the gloom of the swirling fog. I'm forced to drop my speed down to 25 miles an hour to keep from overdriving my headlights.

I drop two tires off the pavement as the road swings to the right. Shaken, I slow to 20 miles an hour. I lean forward and peer intently into the thick white mist. For several minutes all I can see is the edge of the road, then a sign swims into sight, Speed Limit 45 MPH. Not on your life I think. The Yaesu crackles and I catch the tail end of a call, PEM. I punch the down button to halt the scanning and notice I'm sitting on 52 simplex. Another sign drifts out of the thick fog, Lobeco.

I know I'm in trouble because I've never passed through Lobeco on any of my trips north to Charleston. I quickly come to the conclusion that I missed 17 splitting off to the left back where I ran off the road. I decide to turn around in the first road I come to and get back to 17. Once again the Yaesu sputters to life and I hear a very scratchy "WB4PEM monitoring."

I hesitate a moment, then pick up the mike and call, "WB4PEM, WB4PEM, this is WB4ZUY mobile." I listen for a response but none comes. I lower the squelch until I get a steady hiss and then turn it up so that I'm getting an occasional crackle. I go to high power and try again, "WB4PEM, WB4PEM, this is WB4ZUY mobile." The Yaesu hisses and I strain to pick out the words, "...ZUY, better be care... ...washed some..."

"WB4PEM, WB4PEM this is WB4ZUY, you were breaking up pretty bad there, can you go to high power?"

"...bridges out, ...out, ...copy?"

"QSL Bridges out, do you need help?" I query. The radio remains stubbornly silent. I turn the squelch down until I get a steady hiss, straining to pick some words out of the random noise. I pull the lever that activates the Cherokee's emergency flashers and start to pull over to the side of the road, but the truck starts leaning before I'm all the way off the pavement. I stop with the Truck still partially on the road and try once more, "WB4PEM, WB4PEM, this is WB4ZUY. Do you need assistance? Can you go to high power?"

I find myself leaning towards the speaker, straining to pick out a reply that doesn't come. I'm just about to try raising WB4PEM again when I notice an approaching pair of headlights in the rearview mirror. I step on the brake pedal several times to make sure he sees me. The headlights pull over to the side of the road and a pair of flashing blue lights appear.

I wind my window down as the South Carolina State Trooper approaches my truck. The light drizzle is very cold on my arm as the tiny raindrops blow into the car and run down the inside of the driver's door. "What seems to be the problem sir?" the officer inquires, leaning into the open window.

"I think there may have been an accident: I was talking to someone on the radio and he mentioned something about a bridge being out. I've tried to get more information but his signal was really weak and I haven't been able to raise him again."

The State Trooper, his right arm resting on the door, leans into the truck to stare briefly at the 4700, it's orange readouts contrasting with the cool blue-green glow of the dash lights. Water drips off the clear plastic covering bunched around the brim of his hat and falls to the coarse grey fabric covering the seats. The State Trooper pulls back out of the window and says, "The only bridge around here is about 75 yards ahead, could you please stay here while I check it out?"

"Sure", I reply. As the State Trooper walks away I pick up the mike and try one more time, "WB4PEM, WB4PEM, this is WB4ZUY." I listen to the speaker's hiss as the police car pulls around me, blue lights still flashing. I roll the window up and decide to listen for a while, afraid of doubling with WB4PEM.

The police car stops and the beam from its searchlight sweeps back and forth through the milky fog. The beam stops, pointing down in front of the

patrol car which is blocking my view of the road ahead. The State Trooper gets out and switches on his flashlight. Holding the flashlight above his head, waving it slowly back and forth he walks east, towards the target of the searchlight.

For several minutes I listen to the static coming from the Yaesu and try to figure out where the trooper has gone to. Once in a while I can make out a faint beam shooting to the north or south of the milky pool of light from the searchlight. I grab the mike and call, "WB4PEM, WB4PEM, this is WB4ZUY. If you can hear me, make some noise or shine a light, we're looking for you." Static pours from the Yaesu.

The State Trooper climbs into his car and the searchlight winks out. He emerges a few minutes later, and leaving the patrol car where it is, blue lights flashing, he walks back to my truck. He is carrying something in his right hand but I can't make out what it is. I rub some of the condensation off of the inside of the windshield with my right hand, leaving it cold and damp. As the State Trooper approaches I roll my window down.

"The bridge is out alright, but I've looked everywhere and there's no sign of a car or a motorcycle. No wheel tracks or footprints on either side. I double checked, even with the river up it's only about 4 or 5 feet deep here. There doesn't appear to be anything in the river sticking up far enough above the bottom to snag any of the brush and limbs floating by. As near as I can tell, the flood ate away at this side of the river bank and the support on this end fell into the river. Do you have any idea who it was you were talking to?"

"No, I don't know his name, I only caught a little bit of what he was saying, his signal was awfully weak. I think his call is WB4PEM, If I knew anybody in the area we could look his name up in the callbook."

"Did you say his call was WB4PEM?" the trooper asks, a combination of shock and surprise on his face.

"Well, it was noisy but I'm fairly certain its WB4PEM."

"Does the FCC reissue calls?"

"As far as I know they haven't. Are you a ham too?" I ask, a bit surprised.

"Tom Dawson was my best friend all through high school. We played football together, dated about half the cheerleaders together. He was a ham, WB4PEM. It was the one thing he did that I never got into."

"Well, it was probably Tom I was talking to, does he live around here?" I asked excitedly.

"I don't think it was Tom. When we got out of high school we both signed up for a tour of 'Nam. It was April 1st, 1968, Operation Pegasus. We were cleaning up the mess from the Tet offensive on Khe Sanh. The 1st Cavalry Division had just lifted off, man I hated to see those 'choppers leave. Tom was sitting across the LZ, putting on a clean pair of socks, and all of a sudden there was just a smoking hole where he had been."

For a minute I was speechless. The pain was etched deep into the trooper's face. I tried to think of something suitable to say, but after several seconds the best I could do was offer, "I'm sorry to hear that. I guess I must of copied the call wrong, the static and all that."

The trooper snapped back to his cool efficient self. "I don't think there's anyone in the river, but we'll keep looking just in case, but I'm afraid you're going to have to go all the way around to Dale. It's going to be a few days before anyone uses this bridge."

"Actually I missed my turn, I was taking 17 into Charleston.", I admitted.

"Well you're going to have to go back to Gardens Corner, about five miles, to pick up 17.", the trooper says. His eyes fade briefly and his face softens, I can tell that he's back there somewhere with Tom again. Gradually his eyes focus on the crisp orange display of the Yaesu and he pulls his head and arm out of the window. "Be careful out there tonight, driving in this kind of weather is pretty dangerous."

"Thanks, I'll be extra careful.", I reply. The trooper walks a few yards in front of the truck and starts setting out flares, their bright red light sputtering in the rain and fog. I turn the truck around and make it back to 17 without incident. I leave the radio unsquelched all the way to Charleston.

Dark and Stormy...

"OK? It is great! I get to watch your fireworks and I didn't have to pay for any!" One group of young men stretched to look over the fence, and asked if this would be a good place to climb the fence. What polite ne'er-do-wells! I told them that that was what I was here to prevent, but told them where to park to get the best possible view.

I never saw anyone attempt to climb the fence. Some people were setting off illegal fireworks in the direction of the Jaycees. (Florida-legal fireworks are loosely defined as fireworks that don't pop or fly). I would leave my radio behind, lest they think I have some kind of frustrated cop mentality. I would just walk up empty-handed, wearing my surveyor-tape armband, and open the dialog with "Are you the guy with the good fireworks". Notice the complement. When they replied in the affirmative, I would ask them to refrain from setting them off until the Jaycees were done with the show. Notice I didn't try to tell them it was illegal or dangerous. I just asked them to wait. Everyone was very cooperative. I wasn't too concerned about fires because it was still drizzly. At least the lightening stopped.

The fireworks were spectacular this year. It seems every year I enjoy them more. Perhaps it is because at my advanced age, I now have the wisdom to bring mosquito spray. Anyway, the display went from 9:00 to 9:30, and I thought Jaycees did a great job. And so did the hams.

See **Dark and Stormy** on back.

The **TARC Newsletter** is published on a monthly basis. Articles are published based on their newsworthiness to TARC membership, space available, and ease of entry to the publishing medium.

Preferred transfer methods are EMail to *Doug Reed* at Tech-Talk BBS, EMail on 2 meter packet to N4QVY@N4JLR or N4QVY@WD4HIM, direct packet, 3.5" AmigaDOS 880K disk, 3.5" MS-DOS 360K disk, 5.25" MS-DOS 360K disk, direct landline modem, and print / hand-written / hardcopy formats, in that order. Separate each paragraph with a blank line for ease of re-formatting into a publishing format.

Article / classified deadline is two Fridays prior to the date of the monthly meeting.

Articles may be given to the editor, Doug - N4QVY, at the IHOP on net nights, or left with Bud - K4CWG, where it will hopefully make its way to the aforementioned editor.

The **TARC Newsletter** is assembled on a Commodore Amiga computer using Gold Disk's PageSetter and LaserScript desktop publishing software and output to a PostScript compatible laser printer. Bulk printing service is donated by Brevard Office Equipment, Inc. Folding, stamping, and mailing services this month will be done by the gang at IHOP and labels will be printed up by Bud, K4CWG, who requests that any address / name / phone number corrections be directed his way. Thanks to all those involved in this maddening once a month event.

Classifieds

Val, WB4ZUZ asks that if you have any old TARC newsletters around that contain her articles to contact her concerning donating to her library. / don't have but from about a couple of months ago since the computer got the lightening hit and didn't have all the old newsletters on floppy disk. Call Val at 267-9391.

Bill, KB4VYH, would still like copies or originals of articles pertaining to solar energy. Call Bill at 269-4609.

Desk...

remember my password... so many boards, so little time). Thanks to Val and Wynn for their never ending supply of goodies to print. Hope to see everyone at the meeting Tuesday.

Dark and Stormy...

After it was over it took 45 minutes for traffic to clear. We expected that though, so it was no problem. It gave me a chance to socialize with the other hams for a few minutes. Bud and I concluded two things: first, we need to bring a cooler full of Cokes next time, and, second, we need to find ham radio activities that don't make our sneakers go squish.

#ZCZC AP45QST DE W1AW
PROPAGATION FORECAST BULLETIN 41 ARLP041
FROM ED TILTON, W1HDQ WETHERSFIELD CT
OCTOBER 8, 1990
TO ALL RADIO AMATEURS =

After the Sun's spectacular record in August which included four days with the solar flux over 310 and an average for the month of 230, the figures for August and September side by side may look as if someone must have made some mistakes. The September flux high was only 208, a figure 22 units below the August low.

The point here is that even in the years of high solar activity there can be times when the Sun quiets down considerably. September was not a bad month, even though the September flux high was 107 units below that of August. The important point is that just the changing of seasons may have a greater affect on propagation than short term rising and falling of sunspot numbers or the solar flux, important as these factors are. For a good idea of what is in store for us this Fall, look over the prediction charts in each issue of QST.

In the October issue they are on page 62. At first glance they may seem complicated, but for information prepared such a long time in advance, they will be found to be very helpful and easy to use. American sunspot numbers for September 27 through October 3 were 104, 100, 105, 98, 99, 136 and 164 respectively, with a mean figure of 115.1. Solar flux numbers as reported by WWV for the same time period were 150, 150, 149, 156, 158, 161 and 177, with a mean figure of 157.3.

#NNNN

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